

## **Transcript**

**January 10, 2013**

Good afternoon, Commonwealth Attorney Martha Coakley, with me today are Lauren and Ryan Baldner. You're going to hear from them very shortly about their experience with SureShot Portraits, but I just wanted to say first that we all know that a wedding day should be one of the happiest days in anybody's life. Unfortunately for couples who engaged the services of Jesse Clark and SureShot Portrait, he took advantage of more than 80 couples on their wedding days, robbing them not only of thousands of dollars, but probably more importantly those priceless memories.

We allege in this complaint that SureShot contracted with couples to shoot video on their wedding day. Couples were required to give an advance deposit, often as much as \$2,000. In some instances, SureShot just never showed up. Sometimes called and said "We're not showing up" on the eve and then never did show up. In other instances, Jesse Clark or SureShot or some other employee of SureShot showed up, took video, but then wouldn't provide it to the couples. Refused to provide the footage.

Time and again the excuses that SureShot gave bordered on the absurd. In one case they said the footage of the wedding was destroyed by Hurricane Irene. So as we have seen complaints mount up, and in looking at this instance, we also came to learn that there was another dynamic. As couples were dissatisfied, couldn't get their footage, would go on websites like Yelp or TheKnot—which I guess refers to tying the knot—and those couples would be told by SureShot or Jesse Clark that unless they took down the negative reviews, they would not get their footage. In other words, they held that wedding video hostage to the reviews that the couples believed were accurate. As word got out about this increasingly, we believe it would have impacted the business.

We found that Jesse Clark and SureShot then changed names, and they started doing business under Magnolia Films, under InFocus, and although the same players were involved, including Jesse Clark, they were obviously trying to escape the bad publicity that they had acquired by doing business as SureShot. You can see the couple you're about to hear from have some gorgeous black and white stills from their wedding day last May, in 2012; what they do not have is their footage of their video of the wedding and of the reception that followed.

With this action we are seeking three things. First of all, we want to make sure that we stop Jesse Clark and SureShot from doing business in an unfair and deceptive manner in violation of Massachusetts general laws. We do not want any more couples to be harmed in the way that Lauren and Ryan were harmed on their wedding day.

We would like to recover as much money as possible for those people that were out of pocket, but probably most importantly we would like to recover footage, even unedited, for couples so

that they can have it, and they can have it completed by presumably somebody other than SureShot if it has not been edited to date.

You know our office, as Attorney General's office and the Consumer Protection Advocate often deals in cases that involve millions of dollars. This is obviously not one of those cases, but it is a case that relates to unfair and deceptive practices that have affected people in a way that frankly can't be recovered. We're hopeful that with today's action we can get compensation for couples, and we can more importantly recover those videos and those memories that have been lost by the actions.

I'd like to introduce Lauren and Ryan Baldner. When they're finished with their statements I'll return, if you have questions about this case, and then I'll ask Ryan and Lauren to come back if you have questions for them, which is most likely. Thanks.

**Lauren:** We'd first like to start off by thanking the Attorney General and their office for allowing us to come here today to share our story and get our story out there. Our story started very much just like any other couple who would be planning their wedding. We found SureShot Videography online. We did research on Yelp.com, on WeddingWire and TheKnot.

At the time that we looked at the service and signed a contract and paid in full for the contract, he had good reviews. We felt great about going into business with the company.

We didn't think about it again for another eight or nine months until March rolled around and we decided we should get in contact with our vendors to see where they stood. We had no problems getting in contact with any of our other vendors, but when it came to getting in contact with SureShot Videography or Jesse Clark, it was very, very difficult. I sent numerous personal emails to Jesse and had no response back from any of them. I attempted to call him numerous times, left multiple voicemails with no answer back, and then I contacted their email through their website on their Contact Us link.

Finally, a week before our wedding, we heard back from them. It was from the office manager for SureShot Videography. He said, "I apologize that we haven't been able to get in touch with you. I want to let you know that unfortunately Jesse will not be filming your wedding as was stated in the contract, but we will have another videographer to cover the wedding for you." I asked for the contact information for that videographer, and they were unable to supply it at that time. Eventually we said, "Well, we'll have to kind of go with it and see what happens."

The night before our wedding, we received a call from the videographer that had been outsourced by SureShot Videography, saying that he would not be filming our wedding the next day, and he was cancelling on us because he didn't want to be affiliated with Jesse Clark or SureShot Videography. It was devastating news and really set us on an emotional rollercoaster

because we went to bed that night thinking, well, it is what it is, we're not going to have video footage of our wedding.

The next day at our wedding, a videographer showed up. We were very surprised and pleased at the time. It was a videographer who was outsourced by SureShot Videography last minute. He was very polite and did a great job at the wedding, was very nice to our guests, to us, so we were very reassured that we were going to get footage of our wedding. We had a great wedding, left on our honeymoon, had a great honeymoon, thinking that by the time we got home from our honeymoon, we would be able to view our five minute YouTube clip that was promised to us in our contract that we were supposed to be getting within a week of the wedding.

And after we got back from our honeymoon, it was nine days later and we hadn't received it. And when we got home, we turned on the news and that was the first thing we saw when we got back from our honeymoon was the coverage on SureShot Videography and Jesse Clark and at that time, we realized that there was going to be a big problem with being able to recover our footage and our wedding.

**Ryan:** The reason that we are here today is to make sure that this doesn't happen to anybody else. We would love to know that Jesse Clark's doors are shut and this will never happen again. As you see, we've tried to contact Jesse, multiple emails, and he comes back as very unprofessional. And we just want to make sure that we can preserve our memories from our wedding day. We'd like to eventually show our future children our first dance. Everybody that's been married knows how hectic it is on your wedding day, and you forget all the little details. I'd love to see my wife walk down that aisle again, and I just hope that we can eventually get our wedding video back.

**Lauren:** we also hope that by being here today that there will be other couples that were affected by SureShot Videography and Jesse Clark that may not have already contacted the attorney general to please contact them and to seek restitution. We know our wedding video is out there, was filmed, and whether it's just getting the raw footage back or getting the edited version, we know it's out there somewhere, and we'd like to get it back eventually one way or another. Thank you.

**Ryan:** Thank you.